

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FOR ATHERTON FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION,
APRIL 8

REF: STATE 085447

1. FACED WITH UNUSUALLY HEAVY REQUESTS FOR BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS DURING THE PAST MONTH, AMBASSADOR HAD AGREED TO MEET WITH MEMBERS OF FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION MARCH 25, BUT BECAUSE OF MEETING WITH ALLON THAT DATE, SESSION WAS DEFERRED AND FINALLY HELD APRIL 8. GROUND RULES WERE ANNOUNCED AT BEGINNING OF MEETING. SESSION WAS CLEARLY SPECIFIED TO BE ENTIRELY ON BACKGROUND. NO QUOTES WERE TO BE PERMITTED AND ANY REFERENCE TO INFORMATION DERIVED FROM THIS MEETING WAS TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO "A WESTERN DIPLOMAT."

2. SUBSEQUENT TO BRIEFING, FOLLOWING EVENTS OCCURRED:

A. UPI CARRIED STORY ON ITS FILE DEALING WITH "DIRTY POOL" ITEM IN RE ISRAELI TACTICS IN GOING AROUND THE PRESIDENT AND DEALING WITH THE CONGRESS. ATTRIBUTION TO SENIOR WESTERN SOURCE.

B. ISRAEL RADIO HEBREW BROADCAST AT NOON ESSENTIALLY COVERED SAME STORY, ALSO GIVING ATTRIBUTION TO SENIOR
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WESTERN SOURCE.

C. ON MABAT ISRAEL TELEVISION EVENING NEWS TELECAST, AHIMEIR IDENTIFIED WESTERN SOURCE AS AMBASSADOR TOON AND SAID THAT SINCE HE NOT INVITED TO PRESS CONFERENCE HE DID NOT FEEL BOUND BY GROUND RULES.

D. TRATTNER'S STATEMENT WAS REPEATED ON 7:00 A.M. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BROADCAST APRIL 9.

E. ALL ISRAELI MORNING PAPERS CARRIED STORY AS FRONT-PAGE ITEMS (SEPTTEL).

3. FOLLOWING IS PRECISE TRANSCRIPT THAT PORTION OF Q AND A REFERRED TO IN REFTEL:

Q: THERE WAS A STATEMENT...THAT ISRAELI PRESSURES WERE MOUNTING ON THE ADMINISTRATION -- THAT WERE ACTING AS AN ALIENATING FACTOR SO FAR AS PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IS CONCERNED. DO YOU SHARE THIS FEELING?

A: WELL, I CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE WASHINGTON BRANCH OF THE ADMINISTRATION. I CAN ONLY GIVE YOU MY OWN PERSONAL VIEW ABOUT THIS. I FRANKLY THINK THAT WHEN THE ISRAELIS OR ANYBODY ELSE GOES AROUND OUR BACK TO THE CONGRESS AND PUTS PRESSURE ON THIS CONGRESS TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN AIMS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN DISAVOWED BY THE ADMINISTRATION -- I THINK THAT'S WHAT I WOULD CALL "DIRTY POOL," AND I THINK THAT COMES VERY CLOSE TO BEING INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. NOW THAT'S A PERSONAL VIEW. I THINK MOST OF YOU RECOGNIZE THAT I WOULD NOT DO THIS SORT OF THING HERE. I HAVE NOT DONE IT SO FAR. I HAVE TRIED TO DEFEND AMERICAN POLICIES. I HAVE NEVER ATTACKED ANYTHING THAT THE ISRAELIS CLAIM IS ONE OF THEIR POLICIES, AND I THINK, FRANKLY, THE ISRAELI EMBASSY OUGHT TO BEHAVE THE SAME WAY IN WASHINGTON.

4. APRIL 8 (8:00 P.M.) ISRAEL TV BROADCAST IN HEBREW ALSO CARRIED REFERENCE TO U.S. POSITION WITHDRAWAL WEST BANK. FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF THAT PORTION OF BACKGROUNDER:

Q: MR. AMBASSADOR, YOU MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE TALKS IN WASHINGTON WITH KING HUSSEIN ABOUT THE SAME PLAN OR PROGRAM THAT WAS DISCUSSED WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN EARLIER IN THE YEAR -- SOME SORT OF A CONFERENCE ON THE WEST BANK. COULD YOU TELL US WHAT THIS PLAN WAS?

A: WELL, LET'S BE CAREFUL ABOUT OUR TERMS. I DON'T THINK IT HAS EVER BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A HUSSEIN PLAN OR CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRAM. WHAT WE DISCUSSED IN WASHINGTON, I THINK, HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR BY THE CABINET DECISION OF A MONTH AGO -- WAS A FORMULA WHICH INCLUDED ON THE ONE HAND AN "END OF THE STATE OF WAR" AND ON THE OTHER HAND, AND IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS, TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS BY ISRAEL. THIS WAS A NEW CONCEPTUAL APPROACH SINCE IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED IN WASHINGTON THAT RECONVENING THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE WAS SIMPLY NOT WORKABLE: ON THE ONE HAND BECAUSE OF THE SOVIET INSISTENCE

THAT THE PLO HAD TO BE THERE AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, BECAUSE OF THE ISRAELI INSISTENCE THAT IF THE PLO WAS THERE, THEY WOULDN'T ATTEND. AND, FINALLY, BECAUSE OF OUR OWN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PLO. SO THIS IS AN ARRANGEMENT, A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH, WHICH WE WORKED OUT WITH MR. RABIN WHICH WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING OUT WITH CERTAIN ARAB LEADERS. I THINK YOU CAN SAY AT THE MOMENT THAT THIS IS UNDER CONSIDERATION IN CERTAIN CAPITALS. WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY IF THIS WILL FLY OR BE WORKABLE, BUT WE THINK IT'S WORTH TRYING.

5. STEVE DELANEY, CHAIRMAN OF FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION, HAS SENT US COPY OF TELEX OF PROTEST HE SENT TO ISRAEL BROADCASTING AUTHORITY SCORING MABAT REPORT AS A "CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF UNETHICAL JOURNALISM." (TEXT BY SEPTTEL).

6. COMMENT: MAJOR PORTION OF BRIEFING RELATED TO PRESIDENT FORD'S VIEWS ON ECONOMIC REALITIES AND NEED FOR BUDGETARY RESTRAINT WHICH IMPACTED ON DECISION RE 550 MILLION DOLLAR INTERIM AID AGREEMENT. GIVEN OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF STORIES APPEARING IN PRESS HERE AND DISTORTIONS THIS SUBJECT, SEEMED ESSENTIAL THAT I ATTEMPT PROVIDE BALANCE IN THIS MURKY AFFAIR.
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